## Afterward: Crab Mentality and Other Uncomfortable Truths

The following is a postscript to accompany the original piece “Crab Mentality and Other Uncomfortable Truths,” in Part V, Chapter 26, page 229 of Our Culture Resounds, Our Future Reveals, (2020) available here: https://tinyurl.com/ubearte

The context in which I wrote the Crab Mentality piece was: not only the starkly chaotic political climate of the USA at the height of the worldwide pandemic, mixed with my community’s cycles of grief, but the failure of multiple, eventually rejected attempts at conversation with close, conservative Filipino family members, around the naming of hate-crimes, the trauma of internalized racism, the colonized mindset and the long-term, insidious pain this mindset continues to cause us all, when we are not consciously working on it *together*.

What followed in the USA, was the January 6th attack on the US Capitol which produced an incriminating photo of a Walis Tambo, -of all signifiers, the Filipino broom of my childhood, but loaded like a weapon amongst the violent rioters- and wielded with ‘pride’ by a fellow Ilokano.

What followed that event was the horrifying continuation of violent anti-AAPI hate crimes all across the US, one of which would physically target an elder member of my own family who was unwilling to press charges and since walks with a limp.

What followed was the 2022 presidential election in the Philippines and the knee-jerk revisionist arguments still rippling throughout the diaspora around the Philippines’ actual history of martial law.

What then followed in the USA was the Fil-Am community's silence, as Roe vs. Wade was being overturned.

All of these current observations lead me to conclude in 2022, that the potential for a large-scale dialogue to be had in transparency, and intergenerationally, amongst all Fil-Ams sharing a unified voice as Americans, is not yet here.

The reason ‘why’ is this addendum to the Crab Mentality analogy:

While the proverbial “Bucket” that created the toxic environment which lends to crab mentality in the first place is indeed colonization itself, simply calling that bucket out has done little to overturn the mindset of over 34% of Fil-Ams who, for whatever personal or political reason, still do not acknowledge such a thing as internalized racism, let alone that colonization even exists in 2022. Yes, people near and dear to me, who carry literal scars as a result of this toxic environment still decide for themselves to remain unwilling to accept

any form of disruption that would eliminate 'the Bucket' because *they are convinced it is now part of their identity*. As Americans.
This is how the Bucket, which is now so deep it is heartbreaking, causes the irreversible trauma that seeds intergenerational conflicts. Addressing these complexities head-on is *absolutely uncomfortable*. All the more so that we Fil-Ams (rather than the descendants of the colonizers) are the ones left to deal with the majority of the aftermath and the subsequent heavy lifting to dismantle entire, unjust systems. Yet, gentler conversations have not yet resulted in the radical change needed to extricate colonized mindsets, any more than these conversations (if they took place at all) prevented the proverbial Walis Tambo from wholeheartedly joining the Oathkeepers on January 6th, 2022.

I mourn the fact that my own family does not share my values, or ethics, in this matter. When we look into each other's eyes, and we are at a loss for gentler words, we continue to mourn each other's disparate identities.

Moving forward, I cannot and will not erase we are family, connected *kapwa*, distributing the complexities of problems which span generations' worth of self-sacrifice I've inherited the 'privilege' to 'complain' about today. The actual 'decolonization process,' here is less about puritan perfection than it is about diligently fostering and preserving a more truthful space of being that we, as Fil-Ams, finally get to define for ourselves, especially within a chaotic environment that would (politically) prefer we, as a people, forget and thereby self-erase. My art and creative identity is not an elitist positioning with which to bypass the difficult issues. On the contrary. So it goes without saying that discomfort is a vital part of the healing process. As is joy. As is grief. As is rage. As is continued inquiry. As is re-discovery. Whatever form love will take, it is important we remain diligently connected and aware of where we all are, together.

-Jasmine Orpilla, June 2022.